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Letter dated 22 March 2013 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to transmit the attached communication dated 18 March 2013 from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Mr. Anders Fogh Rasmussen, forwarding a report on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, covering the period from 1 November 2012 to 31 January 2013 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter and its attachment to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) **BAN** Ki-moon

13-26849 (E) 040413

Please recycle

Annex

Letter dated 18 March 2013 from the Secretary-General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with Security Council resolutions 1386 (2001) and 2069 (2012), I attach a report on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force covering the period from 1 November 2012 to 31 January 2013 (see enclosure). I would appreciate your making this report available to the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Anders Fogh **Rasmussen**

Enclosure

Quarterly report to the Security Council on the operations of the International Security Assistance Force

Introduction

1. The present report, submitted pursuant to the requirement under Security Council resolution 2069 (2012), informs the United Nations on the progress of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) during the period from 1 November 2012 to 31 January 2013.

2. Throughout the reporting period, ISAF continued to assist the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in accordance with relevant Security Council resolutions.

3. As ISAF reduces in size and strength, it continues to inform and consult closely with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

4. Since the last report the total number of ISAF troops in Afghanistan has continued to decrease as part of the continuing gradual security transition from ISAF to the Afghan National Security Forces, as agreed between the Government of Afghanistan and NATO. Reductions are part of this planning and in accordance with current NATO redeployment planning. There are 103,126 personnel in theatre, provided by 28 NATO and 22 non-NATO countries, as at 31 January 2013.

5. Transition is continuing and tranche 4 was announced on 31 December 2012. When fully implemented the Afghan security forces will have responsibility for the security of 87 per cent of the Afghan populated areas.

6. During this reporting period the number of reported security incidents was slightly reduced when compared to the same period in the previous year. The insurgents' efforts to maintain a high operational tempo have been largely ineffective, owing to a combination of Afghan security force and ISAF operations.

7. The Afghan security forces have improved their effectiveness and are operating more frequently independently. Operations have forced most of the insurgent violence away from the large population areas to the less populated rural areas. This has resulted in less of the Afghan population being affected by insurgent violence than in previous years.

8. During this past quarter, it is assessed that the insurgency was responsible for approximately 96 per cent of total civilian casualties.[1],[2] ISAF continues to work with the Afghan security forces to make every effort to protect the Afghan population and to prevent and mitigate civilian casualties. For 2012 as a whole, according to the UNAMA report released on 19 February 2013, pro-government elements, which include both ISAF and the Afghan security forces, were responsible for only 8 per cent of civilian casualties, a reduction of 46 per cent compared to 2011.[3]

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[1] Total civilian casualties refers to confirmed civilian casualties directly attributable to either ISAF or insurgent military action.

[2] ISAF-caused civilian casualty figures include road traffic accidents.

[3] *Afghanistan Annual Report 2012: Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict.*

9. From 1 November 2012 to 31 January 2013, ISAF suffered 319 casualties including 24 killed in action, 295 wounded in action and three non-battle-related deaths. In the same period the Afghan security forces suffered 1,921 casualties, including 625 killed in action and 1,296 wounded in action.[4]

10. Following a spike in August 2012, insider attacks have returned to average monthly levels. There are several factors contributing to this: a temporary reduction of ISAF partnering, increased force protection by Coalition forces, operational success against attack facilitators and increased emphasis on accountability in leaders of the Afghan security forces.

11. ISAF continues to assist the Government in its effort to counter corruption.

12. ISAF continues to promote the role of women and to emphasize the importance of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) and related resolutions in its dealings with the Afghan security forces, the Government of Afghanistan and Afghan civil society.

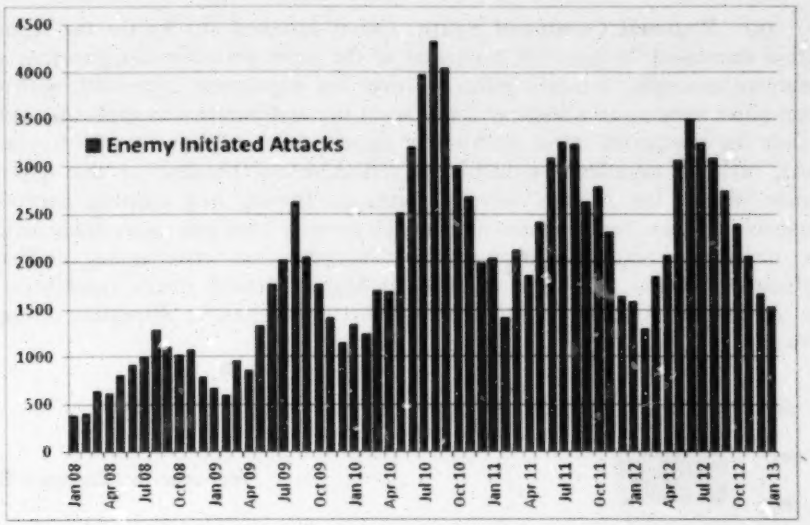
13. ISAF remains committed to monitoring and reporting abuse perpetrated against children by armed actors, in line with Security Council resolution 1612 (2005).

Security situation

14. During the last reporting period, enemy-initiated attacks[5] have declined 5 per cent when compared to the same quarter in the previous year. The insurgents experienced a loss of freedom of movement in urban areas. However, the insurgency remains resilient and maintains an ability to operate in its heartland, the Kandahar and Helmand regions, and also, in a less focused way, in parts of eastern Afghanistan. The insurgents have generally avoided decisive direct engagements with ISAF, giving priority to the use of improvised explosive devices. They continue to attempt assassinations, co-option and intimidation against Afghan security force and government officials, in an attempt to hamper the latter's ability to carry out effective governance. The insurgency continues to affect southern and eastern Afghanistan with 89 per cent of the enemy-initiated attacks within Regional Commands Southwest, South and East. For the upcoming quarter, insurgents are expected to attempt to maintain the pressure against the Government and ISAF and normal seasonal increases in enemy-initiated attacks can be expected.

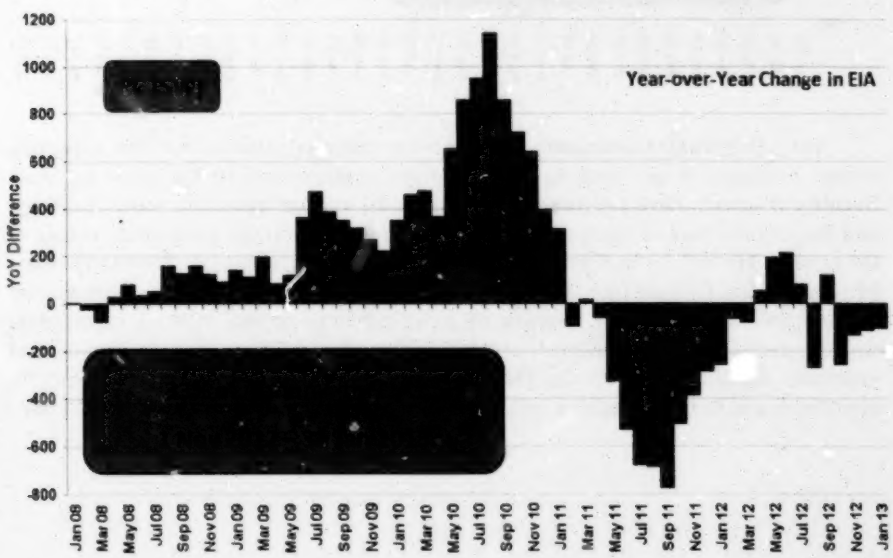
[4] This casualty data is for information purposes only. It reflects the information made available to ISAF and could differ from official numbers published by the relevant Afghan authorities.

[5] Enemy-initiated attacks comprise enemy action (enemy-initiated direct fire, indirect fire, surface-to-air fire) and explosive hazard events, including executed attacks only (improvised explosive device explosions/mine strikes).

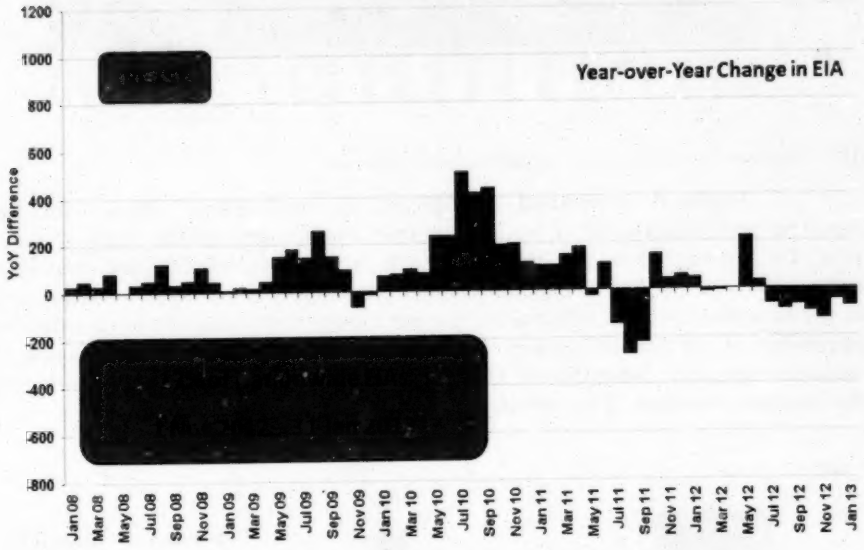


15. Regionally, the security situation is as follows:

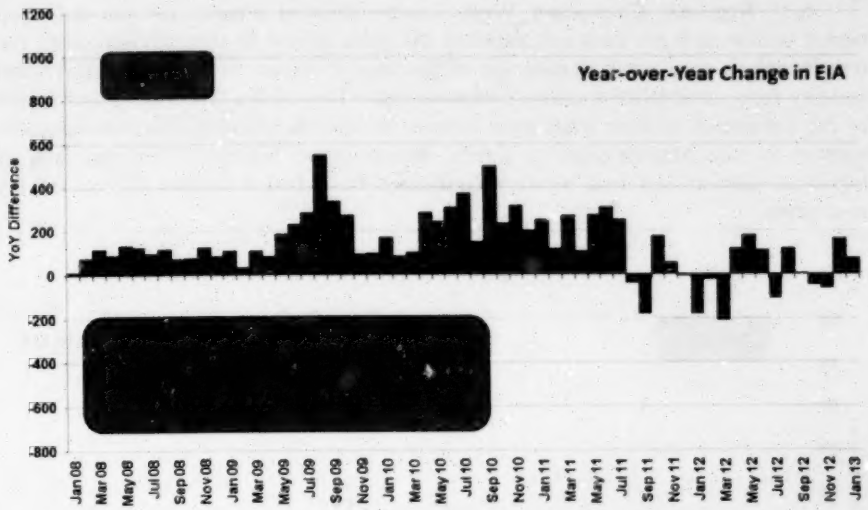
(a) **Regional Command Southwest.** Enemy-initiated attacks for the reporting period decreased 17 per cent compared to the same period in the previous year. The security gains are likely to remain in Central Helmand and in district centres, where ISAF and the Afghan security forces retain a presence. Security gains in northern Helmand are still fragile, but are slowly improving, owing to effective operations of the Afghan security forces and ISAF, focused on the disruption of insurgent networks. Nevertheless, Helmand and Nimruz remain highly important to the insurgents because of the narcotics activities and associated profits.



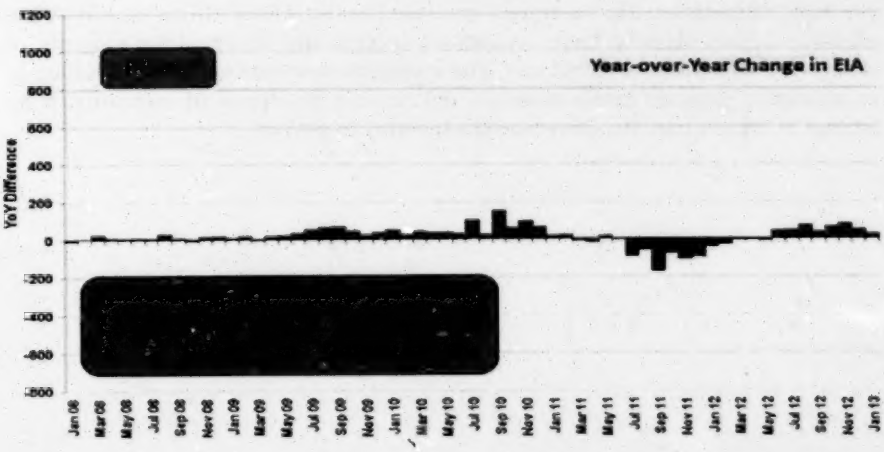
(b) **Regional Command South.** Enemy-initiated attacks for the reporting period decreased 22 per cent compared to the same period in the previous year. Insurgent attempts to regain influence over the population continued, with their main effort residing in Kandahar City. Direct fire and improvised explosive devices remain the insurgents' main methods of targeting the Afghan security forces and ISAF, with a significant reduction in effectiveness because of the improved capabilities of the Afghan security forces in finding and clearing improvised explosive devices. Assassination attempts on security force and government officials are likely to continue. However, the insurgents are experiencing increasing difficulties because of the improvement of Afghan security forces capabilities and the success of Afghan security forces/ISAF operations in disrupting insurgent networks.



(c) **Regional Command East.** Enemy-initiated attacks for the reporting period increased 9 per cent compared to the same period in the previous year. Security incidents have followed seasonal trends, and are generally more dispersed and fragmented than in other regional commands, owing to the geographic nature of the terrain. The border area continues to be exploited by insurgents for the transport of supplies and fighters into the region from Pakistan. The population's anticipation of insurgent influence and forming of movements to oppose it were reported in several districts. The increased capabilities of the Afghan security forces and improved coordination with the Pakistani Armed Forces have hampered insurgent operations and brought positive influence over security in Regional Command East.

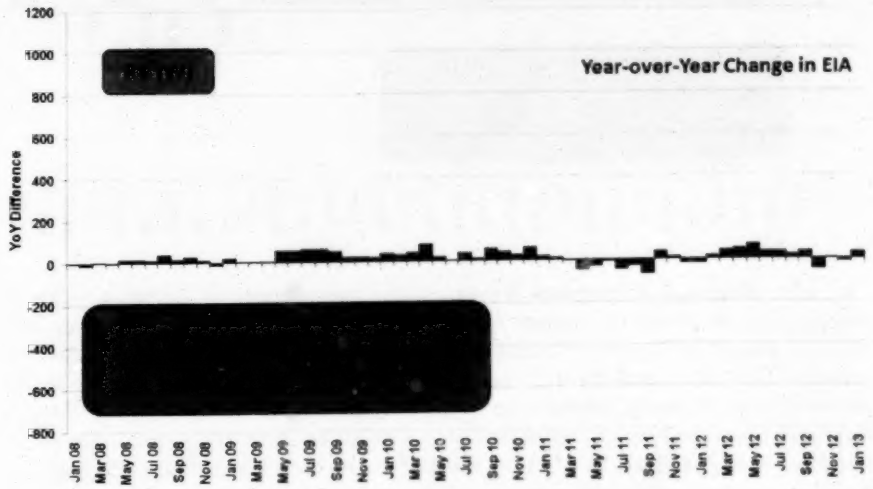


(d) **Regional Command North.** While the number of security incidents significantly decreased throughout Afghanistan in 2012, the total number of enemy-initiated attacks in Regional Command North tor the period from November 2012 to January 2013 increased by 125 per cent[6] compared to the same period in the previous year. It should however be noted that the number of security incidents in Regional Command North represents only a small fraction of the total number of incidents in Afghanistan. In addition, most of the incidents occurred in the Baghlan-Kunduz corridor, where the majority of the insurgents remain restricted in ethnic Pashtun pockets. Nevertheless, while the situation remains complex, it is unlikely that local insurgents will increase their influence beyond Regional Command North, given the ethnic composition and local interests of the insurgent groups.



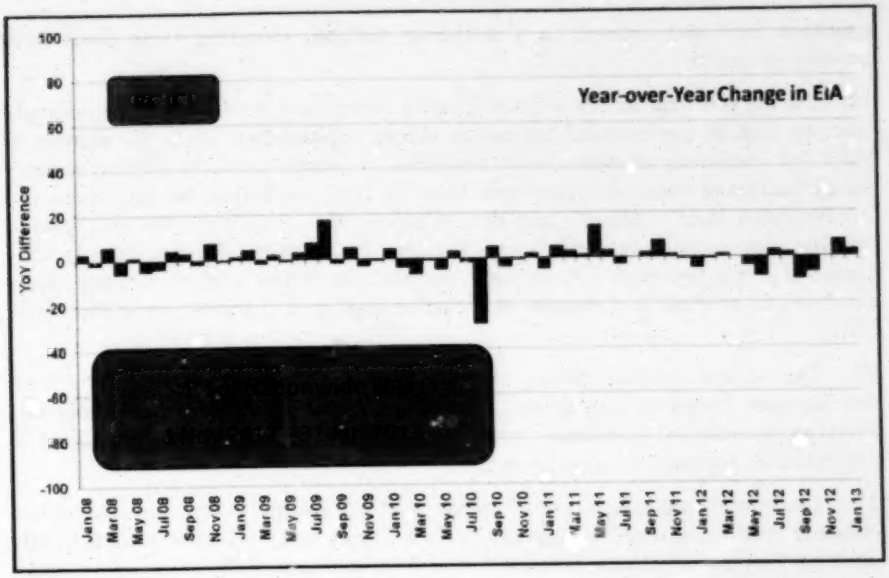
[6] Despite this large relative change, in terms of the absolute numbers of attacks the increase is still rather small when compared to insurgent activity in Regional Commands East, South or Southwest.

(e) **Regional Command West.** Enemy-initiated attacks for the reporting period increased 9 per cent compared to the same period in the previous year, but remain only a very small percentage of the total incidents in Afghanistan. Afghan security forces and ISAF security operations have limited the freedom of movement of the insurgents in their traditional support zones. In addition, increased popular support for the Afghan security forces, disruption of insurgent funding, lack of logistical support and bad weather conditions have had a further impact on the insurgents.



(f) **Regional Command Capital.**[7] Enemy-initiated attacks for the reporting period increased 45 per cent compared to the same period in the previous year, but it should be noted that these represent less than 1 per cent of all reported security events in Afghanistan. The insurgents continued to focus their efforts on Kabul, but effective Afghan security forces operations successfully disrupted the majority of insurgent attack plans in Kabul city. The insurgents continue to focus on Kabul, in an attempt to generate media coverage and create a perception of insecurity, in an attempt to demonstrate the Government's inability to govern.

[7] Owing to the small number of incidents, the bar chart for Regional Command Capital has a different scale than the other regional command bar charts.



Transfer of activities, redeployment and ground lines of communication

16. As ISAF continues its planning for security transition to conclude by the end of 2014, an internal task force has been established to plan, coordinate and supervise the termination or transfer of activities. It will ensure continuity with the NATO-led post-ISAF mission, to avoid duplication of efforts and to provide a permanent link to the Afghan authorities and the international actors.

17. During this past quarter, the ISAF troop-contributing countries, have carried on with the planned redeployment of their personnel and equipment in theatre. This activity continues to be coordinated by ISAF and executed by the countries. All personnel and the vast majority of equipment to date has been redeployed by air, as ISAF and the countries continue to work through difficulties experienced with the ground lines of communication across the neighbouring countries. Most of the difficulties are due to some of the neighbouring States' complex borders and customs procedures and regulations. NATO and ISAF are working with those States to ensure that the equipment being shipped out of Afghanistan is in full compliance with the transit country's own regulations. In addition, ISAF forces have experienced the usual delays on the ground lines of communication caused by seasonal weather and also the impact of a strike by truck drivers in Pakistan. With the changing weather and improved knowledge of transit States' regulations, it is anticipated that more cargo will be redeployed by ground lines of communication in the next quarter.

Afghan National Security Forces

18. The Afghans continue to build and attempt to sustain the security forces. They remain on track overall to meet the strength targets which will support transition to security lead as desired. Currently the Afghan security forces have fielded approximately 331,000 soldiers, airmen and police, working towards their end strength of 352,000. After three years of constant growth, the security forces will

approach their end strength in a deliberate fashion, switching their focus from quantity to quality.

19. During this quarter, the Afghan security forces have continued to increasingly take the lead in conventional operations across Afghanistan, while the number of ISAF-led operations simultaneously continues to decrease. As the Afghan security forces lead more operations they have incurred more casualties, but they have also demonstrated their resiliency and determination. However, over the past quarter attrition[8] continues to be a challenge. The goal for attrition of the Afghan security forces is a rate less than 1.4 per cent, but attrition in the Afghan National Army continues to increase and remains at a challenging level, 2.6 per cent in December 2012.

20. The Afghan security forces continue to face significant challenges to their development including corruption, illiteracy, attrition, inexperienced leadership, shortage of qualified personnel, and limited planning capabilities with regard to management, logistics and procurement.

21. The operational effectiveness[9] of the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police continued to improve, with 41 Army and 71 Police units currently rated as "independent with advisers". A new assessment cycle is currently under way and its likely to confirm this positive trend. ISAF assesses that adviser teams are important for fostering Afghan leadership and improving the overall effectiveness of the security forces.

22. The Afghan security forces continue to require some enabling support, including air (both transport and close air support), logistics, medical, and intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance from international resources to perform at the level necessary to produce all the security effects required for transition.

23. Afghan Security Forces health-care services are progressing well. More than two thirds of the health-care development plan milestones are completed or on track and the development of security forces hospital capabilities is satisfactory. However, the security forces continue to require coalition support as they develop. Pre-hospital care needs to be a focus, especially ground-based medical evacuation.

Afghan National Army

24. During the reporting period, the Afghan National Army grew in size to approximately 181,950 of the 187,000 ceiling, including 390 women. The Army unit fielding plan is expected to be completed late in 2013. With the Commandos and Special Operations Forces, together with the special aviation and elite mobile strike force units, the Special Operations Command grew from a brigade-sized element to a division-sized special operations unit. Approximately 10,200 personnel are under the Special Operations Command. This command has become the key operational

[8] Attrition is defined as the unanticipated loss of a soldier, non-commissioned officer, or officer. Attrition includes dropped from rolls, which drops soldiers who have been absent without leave for more than 45 days, killed in action, disabled, captured and deceased (other than killed in action) personnel.

[9] Afghan Security Forces units are assessed as "established", "developing", "effective with partners", "effective with advisers" or "independent with advisers".

element and has taken the lead in successfully pressuring the insurgency across the country.

25. The NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan strives to professionalize the Afghan security forces. On average 22,000 soldiers are in training every day on 140 concurrent courses. With 2,448 Afghan trainers, the Afghan National Army is becoming less dependent on the Coalition forces. The Army Officers Academy is scheduled to open late in 2013. The Academy will create a training facility that will prepare new officers for leadership roles within the Army. The Academy will have the capacity to train 1,500 officer candidates every year. On 27 December 2012, the new Literacy College at the Kabul Military Centre was officially opened, with a capacity to accommodate up to 2,800 soldiers.

Afghan Air Force

26. Afghan Air Force development is under way but challenges remain. The force comprises 108 aircraft, of which 60 are helicopters. There are approximately 6,000 personnel assigned to the Afghan Air Force and it remains on track towards its end-strength objective of 8,000 in December 2014. There are currently 30 women in the Afghan Air Force. One hundred pilots are in training: 57 student pilots are training abroad in various stages and 43 are in training at Shindand Air Base. Of the pilots in operational flying units, 86 have certified qualifications as co-pilots or above (not including the Special Mission Wing).

Afghan National Police

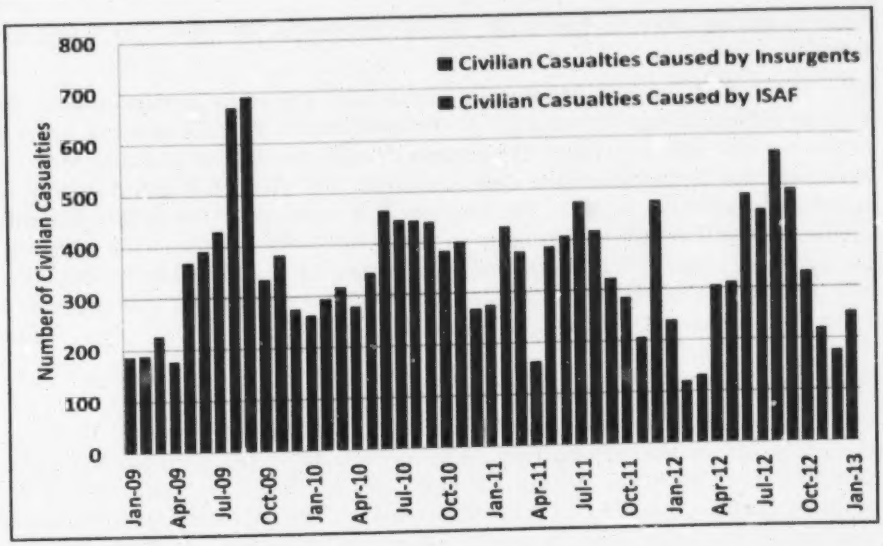
27. After temporarily halting the recruitment of new patrolmen in order to train and promote new non-commissioned officers, the Afghan National Police are likely to achieve their strength of 157,000 in February 2013. During the reporting period, the Afghan National Police grew in size to approximately 148,983. Currently there are approximately 1,500 women serving in the police and nearly 6,500 police officers in training every day. Attrition remains below the overall goal with an annual average of only 1.2 per cent.

28. Professionalization of the police and intensive training efforts allow the Afghan National Police to rely on a full network of training centres. The Afghan National Police are diversifying operational capabilities in intelligence, counter-narcotics, anti-crime, medical, fire, traffic and training.

29. As in previous reporting periods, the Afghan National Police are more professional, more balanced and steadily improving their operational effectiveness. They are expected to be able to meet the requirements to take the lead for security in transitioned areas.

Civilian casualties

30. Civilian casualties continue to be a major concern to ISAF and the Government, and every effort is being made to reduce their number. As the Afghan security forces move to the fore, one of the objectives of ISAF is to transfer the civilian casualty mitigation capability.



31. Considering ISAF and insurgent-inflicted civilian casualties this quarter, the number of confirmed civilian casualties is 28 per cent lower when compared to the same period in 2011/12 and it is assessed that insurgents are responsible for 96 per cent of the civilian combat-related deaths. The casualties are largely attributed to indiscriminate strikes with improvised explosive devices.

32. The distribution of Afghan security forces/ISAF and insurgent-caused civilian causalities[10,11] this quarter shows a similar pattern to the 2012 annual trend. A comparison of the 2011 and 2012 ISAF-caused civilian casualty statistics shows a 50 per cent decrease. This reduction is mainly a result of the ISAF 2012 civilian casualty avoidance and mitigation efforts. The distribution of the 2012 figures shows that 7 per cent of the total civilian casualties were attributed to ISAF and 93 per cent to the insurgency.

33. Insurgents are still exploiting and manipulating to their advantage the ISAF-caused civilian casualties, in order to gain public support and to divert the attention from insurgent-caused incidents resulting in mass civilian casualties.

Counter-narcotics

34. In conjunction with the international community, ISAF continues to provide support to the Government's counter-narcotics programmes and operations, directed against facilities and facilitators supporting the insurgency in Afghanistan. ISAF will continue to synchronize operations with the poppy cultivation cycle in order to maximize the disruptive effects.

35. Preliminary assessments indicate that the poor opium harvest in 2012, without a corresponding increase in opium prices, has had an impact on insurgent narcotics-derived income nationwide. A decline in narcotics-related revenue for the insurgents is expected in 2012, which could decrease their activity.

[10] Total civilian casualties refers to confirmed civilian casualties (deaths and injured) directly attributable to ISAF or insurgent military action.

[11] ISAF-caused civilian casualty figures exclude road traffic accidents.

36. There has been an increase in governor-led eradication since 2011. However, there have been allegations of corruption which have undermined this increase in effort. With poppy planting completed in Afghanistan, there are minimal indications that eradication has affected the farmers' planting decisions. Reports indicate that even more poppy has been planted for the 2013 season.

37. The number of counter-narcotics operations conducted and narcotics and precursor chemicals seized increased in 2012. Ongoing interdiction successes against the trade are causing disruption through denial of financial assets, logistics, infrastructure, necessary chemicals and an increased perception of risk.

38. Programmes to prepare and improve Afghan security force capabilities at all levels remain vital to ensure that Afghanistan is able to sustain counter-narcotics operations post-transition.

Governance

39. ISAF and the wider international community continue to push for counter-corruption reforms through the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework. ISAF, together with the international community, is assisting the Government in creating a coherent system of laws, regulations and offices to ensure that the country's extractive industries are successful and operate in an environment of transparency and accountability. During this reporting period, ISAF supported the Government in reducing corruption in the security sector. ISAF has identified signs of progress in the efforts of the Government to meet the expectations of the international community to counter corruption and organized crime.

40. The Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Programme remains a major part of the counter-insurgency campaign, as it continues to offer insurgents the option to stop fighting and peacefully move back into society. The programme has absorbed more than 6,000 (6,042 as at 5 February 2013) former insurgents so far. During the reporting period almost 1,000 insurgents joined the programme and the numbers of known recidivism cases remains low, with seven registered cases in total. Furthermore, programme figures do not include those who have reintegrated under informal programmes or ad hoc deals, or have simply stopped fighting. Formal reintegration numbers in the southern and eastern regions remain relatively low, mainly for fear of insurgent retaliation and lack of faith in the Government. The structural portion of the programme remains sound although a number of provinces still experience difficulties in executing fund management.

41. Detainee abuse by Afghan authorities remains a concern of the international community, and in order to minimize the risk those ISAF countries concerned temporarily suspended the transfer of detainees to several facilities of the National Directorate of Security and the Afghan National Police. ISAF has implemented an iterative three-phase process in order to nominate, assess and certify or extend the certification of facilities to which ISAF in the future will transfer detainees. International and Afghan human rights monitors as well as Afghan governmental monitors are invited to participate in the assessment phase. The Commander of ISAF will then certify the facilities to which ISAF countries could transfer detainees in the future. Furthermore ISAF will publish a report based on the Commander's assessment.

Transition

42. On 31 December 2012, President Hamid Karzai announced tranche 4 for selected provinces and districts to enter the transition process. When tranche 4 is fully implemented the Afghan security forces will have responsibility for the security of 87 per cent of the Afghan populated areas and 23 out of the 34 provinces. The announcement of tranche 4 sets the stage for the implementation of tranche 5 by mid-2013.

Development

43. ISAF continues work on supporting the evolution of the provincial reconstruction teams and facilitating their handover of responsibilities to Afghan government ownership. The Independent Directorate for Local Governance is working with provincial reconstruction team countries to develop recommendations to the Afghan Cabinet on a new mechanism for coordinating team activities. On 6 November 2012, the Directorate convened the provincial reconstruction team evolution/dissolution working group to finalize terms of reference for the group and discuss the way forward. This work is supported by the NATO senior civilian representative and ISAF.

44. With the Independent Directorate for Local Governance and the NATO senior civilian representative co-chairing the Transition Executive Steering Committee, the advantage of the gathering of provincial reconstruction team countries is enhanced. This is an opportunity to brief on the Directorate-led evolution process and the Ministry of Finance-led base and asset transfer process. The Directorate has completed a draft framework for the evolution of the provincial reconstruction team. This outlines how the Government could analyse team activities, decide which activities it intends to accept, and determine how it will absorb the chosen activities in terms of personnel and funding.

45. From provincial reconstruction teams operating in 21 provinces by the end of 2012, the number of teams will decrease to seven at the end of 2013. The first half of 2013 will see the closure of the Czech provincial reconstruction team in Logar, the Hungarian team in Baghlan, the New Zealand team in Bamyan and the United States teams in Paktyka and Zabul Provinces.

Resolution 1325 (2000) and gender perspective

46. ISAF and the Office of the NATO senior civilian representative continue to promote the role of women and to emphasize the importance of gender balance within the ISAF chain of command, contributing-country forces, the Afghan National Security Forces, the Government and civil society. There are now eight established gender-related positions in the ISAF headquarters structure and the decision has been made to make one of them the ISAF Gender Adviser of flag officer rank. This flag officer, who reports to the Commander of ISAF, will lead, focus and coordinate ISAF activities related to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), related resolutions and gender perspectives. The addition of specific guidance into the ISAF operations plan is being implemented. While these advances are in place continued focus is required to ensure that the commitments of the Afghan security institutions in gender-related areas and activities are ingrained and self-sustaining.

47. Throughout 2012, NATO and ISAF, together with the Government of Afghanistan, have continued to raise gender awareness, provide gender-related training and support the recruitment and retention of women in the Afghan security forces. The situation regarding women in the Afghan security forces will need greater attention, as the recruitment of women is still slow.